



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Keep Your Head in the Game

Brain Injury Awareness Month — March 2011

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Athletes often hear “keep your head in the game,” but sometimes, it's your head that takes you *out* of the game. Each year, approximately 135,000 sports- and recreation-related brain injuries occur in the U.S. The most common injury is a concussion.

Marlena Wald is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control., and she's joining us today to discuss the dangers of head injuries in sports. Welcome to the show, Marlena.

[Ms. Wald] Thank you, Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] Marlena, what is a concussion and what are its symptoms?

[Ms. Wald] A concussion is an injury to your brain caused by a blow or a jolt to your head or your body. The symptoms can occur within a few minutes, a few hours, or even days and they include a severe headache, nausea, dizziness, difficulty remembering, and sometimes, difficulty sleeping.

[Dr. Gaynes] What types of hits or blows actually cause a concussion?

[Ms. Wald] A concussion can occur in any sport or recreation activity. A student athlete can be hit by another team member or one of their own players. They can hit the ground or an actual piece of equipment.

[Dr. Gaynes] In what sports or activities are athletes at greatest risk for this kind of head injury?

[Ms. Wald] The risk actually differs by gender. For boys, the high risk sports are football and wrestling. For girls, it includes soccer and field hockey. But any sport can cause a situation that leads to a concussion.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are there any kinds of strategies that will help *decrease* the chances of getting a concussion?

[Ms. Wald] Yes there are. We try to tell young athletes to learn about and always use protective equipment, especially helmets because wearing a helmet and special padding will reduce the force that might cause that brain injury. Second, learn the rules and safety techniques of your

given sport or recreational activity. Good sportsmanship plays a big role in safety. And finally, stop play if an injury has occurred or you suspect that an injury might have occurred having that young person, your team mate, seek medical attention immediately.

[Dr. Gaynes] How long should a person refrain from participating in sports or other physical activities after being diagnosed with a concussion?

[Ms. Wald] Restriction on activity, particularly sports, is a decision that the health care provider makes given the progress of the person with a concussion and their health history. Typically, for a person who has not had a concussion before, recovery can be as soon as 10 to 14 days, but each person is individual and we emphasize that a person with a concussion be evaluated and managed by a health care provider with experience in sports concussion.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about concussions?

[Ms. Wald] We invite everyone to visit our website at www.cdc.gov/concussion.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Marlena. I've been talking today with CDC's Marlena Wald about the dangers of concussions in sports.

Athletes who've sustained a head injury should get it checked out immediately. If they have a concussion, they shouldn't participate in sports again until cleared by a health care provider. Remember, a winning season is a healthy season.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.